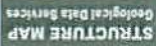


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Houston to play role in growth

By BRETT CLANTON

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In yet another surprise move this week, Halliburton Co. said it will add 13,000 jobs in 2007, including an unspecified number in Houston, as it beels up its business around the globe.

The world's second-largest oil-field services firm told its U.S. employees the news in a memo just days after shocking workers, politicians and the industry by announcing it will open a new corporate headquarters in Dubai. The Dubai announcement has fed speculation that the company is on its way out of town and that Houston's role as a global energy hub may be on the decline. But Halliburton's memo appeared to directly challenge both ideas.

"It is our expectation that our planned growth for 2007 to 2009 will mean that we will hire more than 13,000 new employees in 2007. This will include growth in our Houston employment numbers," Andy Lane, Halliburton's chief operating officer, said in Tuesday's memo, first obtained by the Associated Press and later confirmed by Halliburton officials.

While this is a big jump, it is in line with recent trends in the hot oil-field services sector.

In 2006, Halliburton hired more than 13,000 employees worldwide, more than half of whom were in the U.S.

Some of its chief competitors — including Schlumberger, Baker Hughes, Weatherford International and BJ Services — also added thousands to their ranks last year amid a global boom in oil and natural gas exploration.

Raising more questions But as is often the case with Halliburton, the announcement raised even more questions.

Halliburton did not say where the jobs would be added or in which business units. It did not say which types of positions it needed to fill. Nor did it say why it didn't mention the hiring plans with the Dubai announcement, which might have helped dampen fears the company is tip-toeing out of the U.S.

Halliburton spokeswoman Melissa Norcross said the memo was meant "to further communicate the company's opening of the CEO's office in the United Arab Emirates."

But she declined to provide further details and said Lane was not available.

Halliburton has about 104,000 employees in more than 100 countries, including 11,000 in the Houston area. That makes it Houston's eighth-biggest employer, according to the Houston Chronicle's 2006 top employers list. But by the end of April, Halliburton expects to finally cut ties with its \$10 billion KBR government-contracting and construction unit. That will reduce its size to about 45,000 employees in 70 countries, with about 4,000 in Houston.

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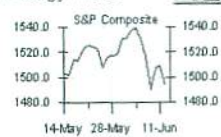


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So the addition of 13,000 new jobs at Halliburton will be significant. It represents more than a 30 percent increase in its employee headcount.

'It makes sense'

At least one analyst was not surprised by the job boost.

"It makes sense," said David Rewcastle with Argus Research in New York. "The whole industry is growing like the space program in the '60s."

In addition to adding employees, U.S. oil-field services companies are also trying to expand their presence in the Middle East.

The region is home to 60 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and is predicted to see more growth than North America in coming years.

Halliburton said Sunday it will move its top office to Dubai and send CEO Dave Lesar there as part of an effort to expand its business in the region.

But the move has drawn criticism from Democrats on Capitol Hill who believe Halliburton is trying to dodge U.S. taxes and increase business with known terrorist nations. Halliburton continues to deny the accusations.

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